



# EPA considers how to safeguard Superfund site in S. Plainfield

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Representatives from the federal Environmental Protection Agency reviewed several remediation and redevelopment options for a Superfund site in South Plainfield last night.

The EPA said the contaminated soil in the Cornell-Dubilier Electronics Inc. site can be capped off from human exposure, left alone, excavated or molded into a cement the EPA says would trap the contaminants.

Most of those who attended the public forum remained neutral to the options presented for the 25-acre site on Hamilton Boulevard. The site, which houses 18 industrial buildings and is bordered by residences and commercial businesses, was designated a Superfund site in 1998 — 12 years after the EPA first discovered contamination in the soil.

More recent testing in 1994 confirmed the presence of polychlorinated biphenyls in the soil and water. The EPA found PCBs in soil, the waters of the Bound Brook and dust in the 18 buildings.

Exposure to PCBs can cause irritation to skin, eyes, nose and lungs and, after long-term, intense exposure, may cause cancer, according to the Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry. The ATSDR said adverse health effects were not reported by people in and around the CDE site.

"Short-term adverse health effects are not expected from exposure to the levels of PCBs seen in the indoor dust and surface soils sampled at the homes across the street from the Cornell-Dubilier site," according to an ATSDR statement.

But more than three years and \$845,000 after the EPA, the CDE and former site owner Dana Corp. removed soil from 13 homes near the site, the present contamination is still a threat to residents, claimed a Middlesex County environmental watchdog group last night.

Edison Wetlands Association representatives said the site has a high and dangerous concentration of PCBs — 8,300 parts per million in its highest area of concentration.

"This is very contaminated, especially with residential houses 150 feet away," said EWA program coordinator Allison Speiser.

Peter Mannino, EPA project manager for New Jersey, declined to comment on whether 8,300 parts per million is a comparatively high concentration.

According to the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection, the PCB remediation criteria for an industrial site is 2 parts per million.

Mannino said length of exposure to PCBs determines the safety hazard but added, "there are levels at the site that potentially pose a threat that need to be addressed."

Speiser said the PCB levels at the site dictate excavation. Capping off the area is not a permanent solution to the problem, she added.

"It's a Band-Aid on a large operation wound," she said.

EPA representatives said the options are open and will be made with public input.

Mannino said the EPA will have a remediation plan for the CDE site by September.